No. 5

The REDEMPTION of Marie Gordon

THE TRAGIC STORY OF
WRONGED WOMANHOOD

Price 10¢

His face was white as a sheet, and his eyes had the look of a hunted animal in them. "Quick, hide me!" he gasped. "The police are after me!"

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BOB HARDING secretly planned to meet that individual on neutral grounds and beat him to a pulp. The days passed on. Betty worried a great deal. Their meager fortune was dwindling down rapidly. They had only a few dollars left in the bank, and the bills were still unpaid.

Existing conditions persuaded her into breaking a promise. Without her husband's knowledge she wrote a long, pitiful letter to her father, begging him for financial help.

Betty felt hopeful after mailing that letter. Surely her dad would not fail her—once his favorite child.

Two days later an answer came. Betty did not open the envelope until Bob had left the house. She ripped the flap off the envelope with feverish haste. But there was no money in it and no check.

The letter had been written by her sister Alice, and this is what it said:

"Dear Betty:

"Father read your appeal for help and he asked me to answer it since he is confined to his bed with an attack of an old chronic ailment. It would be cruel to repeat the exact words he said as he tore your letter into shreds. I have tried to soften him toward you since you married Bob Harding, but it seems useless.

"He considers it an unpardonable crime for a Procter to marry below her station. Of course, I don't agree with him, but arguing only makes him irritable. When I suggested that I share my allowance with you, he flew into a rage. He threatened to cut me off without a penny if I sent you a single dollar.

"As a dutiful daughter I am bound to respect father's wishes. I hope you and Bob will be able to find a way out of your present difficulties. If your husband does not find a position, why don't you help him. There are so many things a pretty and educated girl like you could do.

"In closing I would suggest that you do not write again. It won't do any good.

Yours affectionately:

Alice."

Betty crushed the letter in her hand. She did not burst into tears, although her eyes were hot. A bitter expression crept into her face.

"Oh, I might have expected it," she said with a little moan. "Dad will never forgive me for marrying without his knowledge and consent. I suppose I ought to thank Alice for that suggestion she made. It never occurred to me that I might get some kind of a position and help Bob. I'll do it if he'll give his consent."

It was the work of a few seconds to reduce the letter to ashes. For a long time she paced the floor, trying to find some way out of this unhappy predicament.

She was not afraid of work. Her strength was returning fast. But what could she do? To what use could she put her college education? In a cold analysis of her talents and capabilities, she found that she had little that could be applied in the world of business.

Her best asset perhaps, was her thorough knowledge of music. She might teach piano. As she paused

before the mirror she began to study her reflection. At Vassar they had called her the prettiest girl in her class.

Betty was not only pretty. She was lovely. She was decidedy not of the flapper type. There was about her a sweet womanliness one might see in a painting of the Madonna.

When she sat down at the window from which she usually watched for her husband's home-coming, her mind was busy forming some sort of a plan. Many ideas came to her, and they expressed themselves in her features. There was a pensive look, then a frown, a smile, and then a vivid blush.

The afternoon passed and the evening shades gathered. Betty was beginning to feel just a little worried. Bob should have been back long ago. What was keeping him?

She prepared supper, feeling confident that her husband would come any moment. But darkness came, and still she was alone.

The room was intensely quiet. With quick, nervous steps, Betty began walking back and forth. Panic seized her when the clock struck nine. Suddenly the voice of a boy selling evening papers, came from somewhere down the street.

With a tightening sensation of her heart-strings, Betty listened. Her face paled a trifle when she was able to understand the words.

"Extra!—Extra! Mr. Carter almost beaten to death on the way home from his office!" they said.

As the boy passed the house, Betty ran out and bought a paper. Never had the cold black type of a newspaper looked so ominous, so ghastly. And yet, there was no reason why she should tremble. Mr. Carter was merely the man who had discharged her husband.

Betty read the details which stated that the superintendent had been waylaid by an unidentified man, and that, in the fight ensuing after a short argument, he had suffered injuries which would probably cause his death.

She thrust the paper aside with a feeling of faintness. Her limbs seemed paralyzed. It was while making repeated efforts to rise, that she became conscious of hurried footsteps approaching the house.

An instant later the door was jerked open, and her husband flung himself into the room. His face was white as a sheet, and his eyes had the look of a hunted animal in them.

Betty flew to him with a low cry.

"Quick—hide me!" he gasped. "The police are after me!"

Chapter 19

JACK HOOVER.

THE LATE TRAIN for Cincinnati was about to leave the Twelfth Street station. The conductor stood, watch in hand, ready to give the signal. The rotund dusky porter grinned amiably. Only one more minute, and they would be on their way. Several passengers came on the run and were quickly assisted aboard. The last one was a woman, attired in a neat blue traveling suit.

Both, the conductore and the porter, were struck by her great beauty and obvious agitation. She relinquished her traveling bag of fine Morrocco leather with a sigh of relief, and smiled gratefuly as she was virtually being lifted on the front platform of the last car.

She turned to the left. A cloud of tobacco smoke greeted her.

"Dat's the smokah, lady," the porter reminded her in the slow drawl of the Southern negro. "Yoh bettah take the cah ahead."

There was plenty of room in the next car. As the porter placed the traveling bag on the rack overhead, he noticed that it bore the name: "Marie Gordon" in small script letters. It interested him because his brother worked for a La Salle Street broker by that name.

The fact that this brother often spoke in grateful terms of his employer, caused the porter to feel very kindly disposed toward the owner of the traveling bag and the name.

He hurried away and brought a pillow. With his gold teeth showing in a pleasant grin, he turned the back

of the forward seat over and indicated that she might place her feet thereon.

"Yoh all can take a little nap dattaway if yoh gits sleepy," he suggested.

"Thanks so much," Marie Gordon murmured. "But I don't think I can sleep. If I thought I could, I would take a berth." She opened her purse and gave him a generous tip. "In case I decide to take a berth later on, can you oblige me?"

"Indeed we can," the porter replied eagerly. "Indeed, we can, lady. If yoh finds yoh wants a berth latah on, the conductah will fix yoh up."

He departed in the best of humor.

Marie Gordon, left to herself, began to look around. There was no one among the few passengers on this car she knew.

Most of them were traveling men. Only five women she counted. But she kept on counting, and stopped when she reached thirteen. Thirteen passengers in all. The faint shadow of a smile lurked around the corners of her sweet mouth.

"I suppose if I were superstitious I would move into the forward car or sit in the smoker in the rear," she mused. "Thirteen is our national unlucky number."

She closed her eyes wearily and allowed her mind to wander. Quite naturally it quickly found its way to the babies left behind.

Ah, how glad she was that she had a faithful maid like Annie. It was a great comfort to know that both of her children would receive the best of care, yes, almost a mother's care.

And then she thought of her husband, and she thought of Alice Procter. A bitter smile expressed what she felt. But somehow found it hard to believe that Phil really loved this woman.

Indeed, she would have scorned the idea if it wer not for the scene she witnessed with her own eyes in th pavillion. She had seen her husband holding Alice t his breast, and her arms were about his neck in an atti tude of utter abandon.

And when a married man turns for affection to a old sweetheart, it is a positive indication that the lov for his wife has grown cold. Marie forced back a tear

Mrs. Hendricks' words came back to her in al their hideous significance.

"All married men are alike," she had said. "Afte they are married a few years, they grow tired of thei wives and begin to long for a new thrill. Most of them find it, for there is always some love-crazed or disappointed woman waiting."

Marie reluctantly was ready to admit the truth of that statement now. Phil must have longed for a new diversion, or else he would not have encouraged Alice Procter's outrageous flirtations.

The train had now passed out of the network of tracks in Chicago's far-flung suburbs. It slowed up and finally stopped.

"Hammond!" called the porter. "Hammond!"

Several passengers climbed aboard. Among them was a tall, rather distinguished looking man. He walked slowly through the various cars, evidently undecided where to sit.

Suddenly he stopped. He blinked several times as if he could not believe what he saw.

"Good Lord, it can't be!" he muttered to himself, then kept on staring. "But it is she alright. What in the world is she doing on this train? And she doesn't look overwhelmingly happy. Well, I shall have pleasant company—unexpectedly pleasant company."

Marie Gordon was staring straight ahead with

unseeing eyes. She seemed utterly oblivious to her surroundings and blissfully ignorant of the fact that she was being watched with cold calculation.

When a familiar voice spoke her name, she started.

"Hello, Mrs. Gordon," it repeated. "What a pleasure."

She shifted her gaze quickly to the speaker. A wave of color surged into her cheeks, then receded, leaving them very pale.

"Jack—Mr. Hoover!" she corrected herself, visibly perplexed.

"At your service," he said with a bow. "By jové. I had no idea I would run into such luck when I came aboard this train. The Gods are surely kind to me tonight."

Mrs. Gordon did not move. She sat, her eyes fixed on Hoover. She really had no desire to talk to this man. He brought back disagreeable memories. He reminded her of the Madison Country Club dance, the birth place of her domestic troubles.

And yet, Jack Hoover was not entirely unwelcome now. She had been longing for someone to talk to.

Without being asked to do so, Hoover took a seat beside Marie. He gave her a sidelong glance and wondered what her destination might be. And he wondered too, why she was traveling at this hour of the night alone.

"Going far?" he inquired after a disquieting moment of silence.

Marie swiftly sought for a plausible answer, and resorted to a little fib.

"My favorite aunt in Cincinnati was taken ill quite suddenly and I am on my way to see her," she declared. "I usually take a night train," she added, "be

cause they are never uncomfortably crowded."

Hoover waited rather long before he spoke again. He appeared to be debating with himself whether or not to credit Mrs. Gordon's somewhat hurried statement.

Of one thing he felt sure—the constant quivering of her lower lip betrayed the agitation and misery she was obviously trying to hide.

Her eyes were limpid pools of unhappiness. There was a constant moving in the muscles of her throat as if she was trying to swallow something hard. An occasional flush crept into her cheeks, then disappeared, leaving them very white.

Yes, Mrs. Gordon was in some sort of trouble. She needed a friend. Hoover was only too anxious to be that friend. He moved a little closer, then smiled when Marie drew away.

"Don't be afraid of me, my dear Mrs. Gordon," he said in a low voice. "I am not going to make love to you this time. But if I can help you in any way, I shall be only too glad to——"

"What makes you think I need help?" she broke in a little nervously.

The direct question disconcerted him for a few seconds, then he answered:

"A woman traveling alone at this hour of the night needs protection. Especially if she is young and beautiful like you. Now, please, do not misconstrue what I say. I know you dislike flattery. You are not a flirt like most of the women of your social set.

"The man who presumes to take liberties with you is apt to get his face slapped. I found that out the night of the Madison Country Club dance."

A quick blush mantled Marie's cheeks.

"I wish you would not allude to that very unpleasant incident," she replied, her eyes downcast. "I

was partly to blame for what happened that night. I should not have gone out on the veranda with you. It was a mistake in more ways than one. For one thing, it cost my husband a large sum of money."

Hover gave her a swift glance.

"Indeed?" he drawled innocently. "You have aroused my curiosity, Mrs. Gordon. I should like to know how it proved an expense to your husband."

She explained briefly, while he listened with a peculiar expression in his eyes. It was so unnecessary, for the lion's share of that money had gone into his own pocket.

"By the way," he said, changing the subject for two reasons. "Are you and Alice Procter still such good friends?"

The unexpected question startled and confused Marie. For a while she did not know what to answer. How could she tell this man that Alice Procter had proven her most dangerous enemy, and that this same Alice was responsible for her being on that train bound for Cincinnati.

"Miss Procter and I never were close friends," she said frigidly.

"No?" Jack Hoover raised his brows quizzically and laughed. "She was rather fond of your—your husband, wasn't she?"

Marie bit her lip and gazed out of the window.

The conversation had drifted into a channel she abhorred. To hear Alice Procter mentioned in connection with her husband made her want to scream. The discusion must end then and there. She felt she could not stand it.

A lengthy space of disquieting silence fell between them. The train had now gained its maximum speed. It fairly flew, with the cars rocking from side to side

"God help me!" she prayed. "God help me!"

as they rounded a curve.

The motion had wedged Marie Gordon tight between the wall on one side and Hover on the other. The latter, trying to keep from further crowding his fair traveling companion, put out a hand to steady himself. His arm had passed back of her, which gave the couple an attitude of intimacy.

Approaching from the front end of the car, one would quickly have gained the impression that Hoover had his arm around Marie.

It was unfortunate—very unfortunate for the latter, that an old acquaintance, who was also a close friend of Phil's, should enter the car that moment. Neither Marie nor Hoover knew that Tom Atkinson was aboard that train. But there he was, bound for New York, with a stop-over at Cincinnati.

Tom, not being able to sleep in the stuffy berth, and feeling the need of some exercise, had set out to get it by traveling the length of the various coaches. He caught one glimpse of Marie Gordon, apparently in Hoover's arm, then turned back in all possible haste.

"Good God!" he gasped, as he reached the platform between cars. "I can't believe it. Marie Gordon on this train with that skunk. What does it mean?"

But no explanation was necessary, except what he had seen with his own eyes. Certains incidents of the past came back to him now, saturated with sinister meaning. He quickly recalled the Madison Country Club dance, when Hoover had taken Marie away from him.

"Poor Phil," he went on in his painful soliloquy. "This will kill him." Then he added fiercely: "By God, I am ready to believe anything now. Damn those women anyhow. Not a single one is to be trusted."

So, positively under the impression that this was a case of another discontented wife willfully gone astray,

he decided not to interfere, although he felt strongly tempted to go in there and whip Hoover within an inch of his life.

During the rest of the trip to Cincinnati he kept out of sight. As the train drew into the Grand Central Station, Tom Atkinson pulled his hat over his eyes and dropped off.

What he expected to see, took place. Jack Hoover assisted Mrs. Gordon to the ground, then took her arm and together they disappeared.

The next minute found Tom sending a telegram to Phil Gordon.

He ended the message with the words: "Come at once, or wire instructions to me in care of the Gibson Hotel."

Chapter 20

ALL ALONE

IT MUST have been a weighty reason indeed which caused Bob Harding, cringing with terror, to implore his young wife to hide him as he rushed into the room. He was not the man to run from danger. Neither had he ever disclaimed the responsibility for any mistake made by himself. But something had happened that was bound to hurt the one woman he loved—his wife.

What caused him to lose his head to the extent of seeking to hide from the pursuing police, was the realization of the grave consequences sure to follow his brutal assault upon a former employer, who was none other than Superintendent Carter.

Betty stood there, shaking with dread, watching her husband dart through the door which led to the adjoining bedroom. She knew instinctively that something terrible had happened.

"Bob!" she cried, flinging out a hand. "Oh, boy, what have you done?"

She was about to follow him and ask him for an explanation, when two police officers entered. At sight of her swaying, frail figure, and the tragic look on her white face, they halted.

"Sorry, lady," the one foremost said not unkindly, "but we'll have to search this house. We are after the fellow who nearly beat Mr. Carter to death."

"There—there must be some mistake," she stammered, trying bravely to smile. "My husband could not have done this horrible thing. I can't believe it, and neither would you, if you knew him as I do."

"The man we are after may not be your husband," the other officer spoke up. "But whoever he is, he is a darned fast runner. He got away from us and we saw him enter this house. We don't like to annoy you, but we must do our duty and search for him."

Betty's mind was in a mad whirl. She dropped her eyes to the floor where lay the extra she had brought a few minutes before. The big black headlines stared at her.

Instantly she knew that these police officers were after her husband. She knew also that Bob was guilty. But her whole soul rebelled against giving him up.

Unconsciously she was drawn toward the door behind which the man she loved more than her life sought refuge. These two stern guardians of the law meant to drag him into a cold prison cell. Her hand reached behind her, and clutched the knob eagerly.

The officers looked at one another, then advanced.

"He—he is not in here!" she panted, her eyes gleaming with a desperate resolve.

"Yes, he is," they spoke together.

"But you—you can't have him—you can't!"

The instant a hand was laid on her arm, she screamed. Betty fought like a wild cat to prevent the inevitable. Again she screamed, and then the door was opened from within. Bob Harding stepped out, pale and determined.

"Let her go!" he cried fiercely. "Let her go!"

Betty stared at him with a world of nameless agony expressed in her white features.

"Bob—Bob!" she sobbed, and flew into his arms.

"It's alright, little girl," he said tenderly. "I'll go with these officers peacefully. It's no use to fight against the law. I did it and must take the consequences. But," he added, his voice breaking, "what will become of you?"

"Come on, young fellow," one of the officers interposed. "We'll have to arrest you."

Bob Harding paid no attention to the speaker. He was holding his trembling young wife close. It did not seem possible that they could part like this, although he knew that they must. To leave her all alone when she needed him most, was a frightful thing to contemplate.

"Oh, my God," he wailed. "What will become of you, Betty?"

"Don't worry about me, dear," she sobbed, her fingers working nervously up and down the lapel of his coat. "I'll be alright."

He hung his head, his lips quivering.

"Please don't worry about me," Betty went on. I'll find some work to do until you are out of this trouble. I'll find something near—near the prison. I want to be near you, dear. Now don't think of me. I'll be alright."

Bob straightened up.

"No," he said with determination. "No. I have wrecked my life. I am done for, but I don't want to wreck yours. You are only a girl. Get a divorce and go back to your people."

"I won't!" she flared up. "I won't. I love you!"

He shook his head.

"And because you love me is the very reason why you must do it, sweetheart. Do you think I want you to see me in stripes—a prisoner—a convict? Why honeypet, I couldn't stand it."

One of the officers wanted to make an end of the scene. He advanced, but the other held him back.

"No, I won't give you up," Betty protested as she threw both of her arms about Bob's neck. "You are my husband. Do you think I'd desert you when you are in trouble? No, I'll die first. I am going to stick to you

no matter what happens."

Bob Harding stood there regarding her with a new light in his eyes. He had not expected such loyalty. It touched his very soul. Again he shook his head, although it nearly broke his heart to deny her.

"Listen, girlie," he breathed tenderly. "Do you realize what I'll be when I get out? I won't be the Bob Harding you love now. I'll be an ex-convict, marked and branded. You don't know what prisons do to a man—to his body, and to his soul. Why, you'd hate me."

"No—no!" Betty cried stubbornly. "I could not hate you though you were a murderer. I'll wait for you. I'll work for you. I'll wait patiently until you come back to me."

It was not often that these two police officers saw a strong man weep as Bob Harding was doing now.

"Oh, Betty—Betty, I—I am so grateful," he sobbed brokenly. "I—I wanted you to say just what—what you did. Your love and loyalty have given me the strength I needed. I can stand it now. I'll endure the prison sentence because I know you'll be waiting for me. And I am coming back to you. It is the only thing in the world."

He put her aside very gently and faced the officers.

"I—I am ready," he said in almost a whisper. "No. you needn't handcuff me, please don't," he added when he saw a suggestive move made by one of them. "I'll give you my word that I will not attempt to get away."

Betty made a sudden motion toward him, but he waved her back. With his head held high, he stepped briskly through the door. She raised both hands, then let them drop. As she watched her husband disappear with the officers, a great void came into her young life.

Sobs, passionate and heart-breaking, fell upon the intense silence of the room. She placed one hand

upon her heart, beneath which a litte human being had already begun to spring into existence.

"Oh, God help me!" she prayed. "God help me!"

Bob Harding's trial and conviction lasted only a short time. The many spectators present felt sorry for the youthful wife who came, dressed in somber black, and sat alone in her unutterable grief. The men and women composing the jury, gazed at her from time to time in genuine compassion. Even the judge seemed deeply affected.

But the law had to take its course. The case was one of premeditated assault with intent to kill, as the evidence showed conclusively.

The attorney for the defense, made an eloquent plea in behalf of the prisoner and his young wife. He laid particular stress upon the fact that Mrs. Harding was to become a mother.

"There is a limit to human endurance," he ended dramatically. "Bob Harding never would have thought about harming Carter if this egotistical superintendent had not stooped to such despicable methods of keeping him from earning a living by securing a position elsewhere. You all must agree with me that the provocation was great, and for that reason I ask you to be merciful to this young man, whose life heretofore was unblemished."

A murmur of assent went around the room. It continued until the prosecuting attorney rose to make the closing address.

Before he began to speak, he glanced sympathet-

ically at the defendant's sweet-faced young wife. It became very obvious that he reluctantly proceeded with the task at hand.

His voice was not at all resonant as he made the opening remarks. Neither did he look like a man to be feared. He went over the case briefly. His review brought out nothing new. In concluding he said:

"While the evidence showed that Harding lay in wait for his former employer, there are mitigating circumstances in this case which I wish to bring to your attention. Superintendent Carter did a grievous wrong when he deliberately attempted to prevent the defendant from obtaining work elsewhere.

"No matter what the differences were between these two men, no one had the right to deny another his daily bread and butter. Carter did this. But while the provocation was great, we must not countenance the taking of the law in our own hands. Harding has done that. However, his attitude during the trial I commend highly. It was manly and frank. He is deserving of your mercy. If the jury does not feel inclined to deal leniently with him for his own sake, I ask that you do so for the sake of his young wife, who, I understand, is to become a mother."

Again a murmur of assent swept through the room. The judge glared at the spectators for a moment, then reached for the gavel.

"I must warn you against making any audible demonstration either for or against the defendant," he said. "This is a place where law is dispensed without fear or favor."

But while he spoke, his tone was unusually mild. And it grew milder still when he charged the jury. Like the prosecuting attorney, he glanced occasionally at the young wife of the prisoner.

"She is innocent and is bound to suffer most," he ended. "I regret exceedingly that I must ask you to do your duty, however. Sympathy for the defendant and his wife must not be allowed to influence you. You must do your duty as your conscience dictates."

The jury filed out slowly, and then the ordeal most dreaded by all unfortunates, convicted of a crime, began. It is the period during which the twelve men and women decide what the punishment shall be.

It is the period during which hope rises and falls; hours of torturous waiting, when smiles are rare as the proverbial rich men in Heaven. Bob Harding sat, his chin resting in his hand. He did not look up for fear of encountering Betty's agonized eyes.

The judge left the bench, which gave the crowd a chance to air their views without danger of being hushed by the crash of the gavel.

Betty was leaning slightly forward. She sat as rigid as a statue. Only once did she show a sign of life, and that was when the attorney who had so valiantly defended her husband, whispered some words of encouragement to her. A pitiful smile crossed her palid features, and she gave a slight nod.

Perhaps an hour had elapsed when the jury returned. The judge was hastily summoned and he at once called the crowd to order.

"Have you agreed upon a verdict?" he asked, addressing the foreman of the jury.

"We have," was the prompt retort. "We find the defendant guilty as charged in the indictment, but we recommend him to the mercy of the court, and pray that his sentence may be light."

The judge nodded in apparent approval. He turned to Bob Harding.

"Young man, stand up," he said, clearing his

throat. "You may consider yourself fortunate. If the jury had not recommended you to the mercy of the court, I should, under the law, have been compelled to sentence you to ten years at hard labor. As it is, I will shorten that term to two years, with the usual time off for good behavior."

Harding's face showed his deep gratitude. He made a brave attempt to smile, then said in a husky voice:

"I thank you, Your Honor."

"And I feel disposed to grant you a concession," the judge spoke again. "Before you are taken back to your cell to await your transportation to the State's prison, you shall be given sufficient time to make the necessary arrangements for the care of your young wife, who has stood by you so loyally.

"When you have served your sentence and are free," he added slowly, "I hope you will control your temper. Always remember what would have happened to you if you had killed Mr. Carter in your anger. You would have been sent to the chair without doubt."

"I shall remember," Harding answered. "And again I thank you, Your Honor."

Kindly court officers had led Betty into a private room where she sat awaiting the coming of her husband. The moment he came in, she uttered a low cry and rushed into his eager arms.

"Bob—Bob, how can I bear to live so long without you?" she sobbed.

"You must be brave, dear heart," he said, keeping himself under superb control. "Two years is not such a long time, and I have a good chance of being released before that. Now, please, brush away those tears and let me see you smile. I don't want to be taken away remembering you a wretchedly unhappy woman."

She gave him a smile so sweet, so pathetic, it cut him to the very soul. And then when they had resigned themselves to the inevitable and Betty became calm, they made their plans.

But somewhere it is written that "Man proposes and God disposes."

Chapter 21

HEARTACHES

PREJUDICE and envy are two of the most deplorable and destructive weaknesses of the human race. Closely allied is that of suspicion. We see sinister motives behind the actions and utterances of those who do not agree with us. Philip Gordon was above these things. He was not a small man, mentally nor physically. He practised charity in its broader sense. He never took snap judgment of any man or woman.

Strange to say, however, he lost sight of these admirable traits where his lovely wife was concerned. He trusted her, of course, but there were entirely too many men among his friends who took frequent occasion to lavish compliments upon her.

They were rewarded by a smile such as only Marie Gordon could give. They also aroused a feeling of resentment in the heart of her husband. He became the victim of jealousy.

A man so passionately in love as Phil Gordon was

"Don't be afraid of me, my dear Mrs. Gordon," he said in a low voice. "I am not going to make love to you this time."

with his wife, is apt to become irrational at times.

Like most men, he demanded absolute chastity and strict adherence to social conventionalities in the woman he married. If Marie went beyond that, he showed instant disapproval.

He was rather unjust in this, for he did not always practise what he preached. It was perfectly alright for him to carry on an occasionl flirtation with Alice Procter, an old sweetheart. But in doing that, he assumed privileges he denied his wife.

The danger of this was brought home to him most forcibly when Alice Procter so suddenly bared her soul to him in the pavillion. He had gone too far and realized it when it was too late.

Gordon knew very well that his wife had been deeply hurt, when he spent an unnecessary length of time showing Alice over the grounds. It was highly improper, he realized that, and he vowed to himself that a scene like the one in the pavillion should never happen again.

Like all foolish men, he was ready to lock the door after the horse had been stolen.

It did not surprise him when Marie treated him coldly in the presence of the guests. And he rather expected that she would not come to him after they departed, for the usual pleasant review of the evening. He went to his own room, crestfallen and apprehensive.

His mind was further disturbed when he knocked on the door of his wife's boudoir, determined to offer an apology and smooth the matter over, he received no response.

He spent a restless night. More than once he cursed himself for having encouraged Alice Procter to the extent of spending a solid hour with her in the dark It was improper; he admitted that now, and again he

vowed that a similar thing should never occur again.

The next morning he rose in a distracted frame of mind. A keen disappointment awaited him in the dining room where he went for breakfast. Marie was not there to greet him with her sweet smile.

Instead he found a sealed envelope lying beside his plate. He looked at it, then picked it up, and a little nervously, broke the seal.

As he finished reading Marie's message he leaned back and laughed. Surely, she could not have been serious when she wrote those lines. The letter had no doubt been written when picque and unreasonable jealosy dominated her.

"Foolish girl," he mused. "You ought to know by this time that no woman could come between us. And the idea of you talking about a divorce. Why, you ought to be spanked for suggesting it."

He read the note again, and now he discovered that he had missed one very important sentence. It was the one which made reference to the incident in the pavillion. Philip grew a shade paler, and every inclination to laugh suddenly left him.

For a long time he sat there in uneasy silence. Instead of going to his office, he walked into the library, where he dropped into a chair. He was obviously worried, and finally sent for Annie.

His questions were asked in a quivering voice. The girl made one statement which was not at all conducive to Gordon's peace of mind. She said that her mistress had seemed desperate when she left.

"You—you must go after her, sir," Annie begged, in tears. "I am afraid she'll do something terrible."

"Not if she went to visit her aunt," he replied. "Miss Carey is a straight-laced old spinster, and she'll not tolerate anything approaching misbehavior on my

wife's part."

"But she might not have gone to her aunt's," the servant suggested.

Gordon turned pale to his very lips. A most unpleasant thought crossed his mind. He managed to force a smile, however.

"Very well," he decided. "I'll go on the noon train. I'll be in Cincinnati by eight o'clock to-night. Yes, you are right, Annie," he added, a queer tremulo in his tone. "I must go after my wife."

He began making preparations for the trip immediately. He appeared to feel relieved, and even hummed a tune to himself.

Within twenty-four hours he would have Marie home again. An apology and a promise of good behavior in the future, would restore domestic peace and tranquility.

But a dark shadow was approaching the house. It was cast by the diminutive figure of a Western Union messenger boy.

Philip was just passing through the hall when the front door-bell rang. He was used to receiving telegrams, but when he reached for the familiar yellow envelope this time, he had a strange feeling as of impending disaster.

He found himself wondering why the hideous color of yellow was being used in manufacturing those envelopes.

Instinctively he dreaded the message this one contained. He hurried into the library and closed the door behind him. The next instant he was reading the fateful words sent by Tom Atkinson.

His tall frame shook, his face turned ashen, and a groan burst from his lips.

"My God, I can't believe it!" he gasped. "I won't

believe it. Tis thing is too horrible—too utterly impossible. Marie and Hoover gone to Cincinnati together? No, no!" He ground his teeth, intense jealousy distorting his features.

While he paced the floor in big, restless strides, he mumbled constantly to himself. Tom Atkinson's telegram came like a hideous flash of lightning out of a clear sky.

He struggled vainly against the black suspicion engulfing him.

In desperation, he tried to think of some mitigating circumstances. He even wondered if this all was not a frightful joke. But men like Atkinson don't jest when a woman's honor is at stake.

And besides, what he regarded as an incontrovertible fact, was in his possession. His brain was in a mad whirl. His mind became poisoned with ideas unworthy of him.

Gordon recalled every incident connecting his wife with Jack Hoover. Every one of them was now clothed with rank, sinister meaning. Of course, they had been lovers. There could not be any doubt about that.

The note Marie had left for him before leaping into a life of continued shame, was merely an attempt at self-justification.

And still he sought desperately for a glimpse of hope.

He clutched at it with every ounce of mental strength and forced perserverance. His wife's meeting with Hoover on the train might have been accidental, and it might not have been.

If she was now with her aunt, it would at least give him the satisfaction of knowing that they had not registered at one of the Cincinnati hotels.

He rushed to the telephone and called the telegraph office. He dictated the message to be sent to Miss Carey, and asked for an immediate reply.

It came in less than an hour, and killed the last remnant of hope. It had evidently been sent by a servant. It said:

"Miss Carey left for California several days ago. Mrs. Gordon is not here."

Philip crushed the paper in his hand with a savage imprecation.

"Oh, I might have expected it," he muttered bitterly. "I was never quite convinced that Hoover was entirely to blame for what happened that night at the Madison Country Club dance. Marie pulled the wool over my eyes, and I allowed her to get away with it. Well, I'll divorce her alright as she suggested, but she'll never get those innocent babies in her filthy clutches."

As one day followed another, he lived as in a harrassing dream.

He shut himself up in his room, refusing to see anyone. Even the sight of his children had become painful to him. He could not bear hearing them clamor for their mother.

"I want muvver," was little Harry's cry morning, noon and night.

"Me want muvver, too," lisped the baby girl, her eyes swimming in tears.

But the mother did not come, and neither was the father able to fill the void left by Marie's continued absence.

The Gordon home had become a veritable swamp of bitter thoughts, vain longing and brooding silence. Visitors were excluded and the gossips began to wag their tongues.

Philip only left his room when he was summoned

to the nursery by the faithful Annie. The latter wept many unhappy tears, as did Ruth, Phil's sister.

Ruth Gordon was utterly wretched.

She felt that she was responsible for the terrible thing that had happened. Ah, how she regretted having brought Marie within vision of the scene in the pavillion.

She tried to make amends by pouring oil on troubled waters.

"I don't believe Marie deliberately ran off with another man," she said to her brother one night, when he seemed on the verge of indulging in another wild outburst of grief. "She wasn't that kind."

"Don't talk to me about her!" Philip snapped viciously. "Get out!"

But Ruth did not go.

"Now listen to me, Phil," she persisted gently. "You might at least give her a square deal. Don't condemn her without giving her a chance to explain. You must admit that your wife had some provocation. It wasn't right for you to carry on with Alice Procter the way you did.

"Marie and I saw you hug and kiss her in the pavillion. No wife with any——"

Gordon whirled upon the girl like an enraged bull.

"Well, if you and Marie set out to spy on me, you got just what you expected!" he roared. "But you were wrong—both of you. There was absolutely nothing serious between Alice and myself. Alice made a fool of herself that night. My only mistake was that I stood for it longer than I should have."

Ruth tossed her head derisively.

"That sounds just like a man," she mocked. "Blame the woman. That is what you men have been

doing ever since Adam. But you are not as innocent as you would have me believe. What I saw convinced me that——"

"Get out!" her brother screamed, beside himself. "I don't want another word out of you!"

And thoroughly frightened, the girl quit the room in a hurry.

Perhaps an hour later, Annie knocked at the door, and in an excited voice informed Phil that little Harry had developed a sudden cough, and that he showed signs of becoming feverish.

Gordon ran to the nursery, his breath coming in short gasps.

He found the boy moaning and tossing on his bed. He seemed a great deal worse than Annie reported. Of course, Phil expected him to cry for his mother, and he had tried to steel himself against it.

But he could not stand the constant wail of: "Muvver—muvver, oh, muvver." It was agonizing to listen to it.

He called up Dr. Van Buren at once and asked him to come as quickly as possible. The physician diagnosed the case as a violent cold and advised extreme caution. Little Phyllis was removed to a room in a different part of the house.

"I suppose you want a nurse, Phil," Dr. Van Buren suggested. "I'll send you one within the next hour."

"No, I'l stay with my boy," Gordon answered in a whisper.

The docter looked at him and shook his head.

"You'll have to be on the job, old man," he said. "It is imperative that the boy takes his medicine as prescribed. Everything depends upon that. If you think you can stay awake all night, very well. If not——"

Continued in next number

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